

# KC Weed News – February 2008

King County, Washington

(<http://dnr.metrokc.gov/Weeds/kcweednews.htm>)

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### Weed of the Month: Creeping Buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), King County Weed of Concern, <http://dnr.metrokc.gov/weeds/buttercup-creeping.htm>

This month's weed is a good example of a plant that is such a common sight we almost don't notice it anymore. However widespread it is now, creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*) is a European import that has hitchhiked into our country and is not part of our native flora. The earliest specimen in the University of Washington herbarium is from 1889, so this plant has certainly been with us for a long time. However, those of you with long memories may remember a time when this plant was not nearly as abundant as it is now.

If you are looking for creeping buttercup this time of year, it is most easily recognized by its three-parted, toothed leaves lying close to the ground in rosettes, usually growing in damp areas. The leaves are typically dark green often with light patches. Most of the stolons between the plants have died back for the season, so the rosettes are growing as single plants. If you leave them alone, they will start forming stolons from their leaf axils in the spring and begin to spread into large dense mats of inter-connected plants. We will probably start to see their glossy, yellow flowers in late March and plants will continue to flower throughout the summer. There are some excellent pictures at the [UW Burke Museum Herbarium website](#).

In urban areas, you can expect to see creeping buttercup in backyards, garden beds, vacant lots and along streams and lakeshores. In rural areas, it is often found in pastures and wet meadows as well as gardens and yards. And, unfortunately, many natural areas, even some quite remote, have sizable populations of creeping buttercup along trails, wetlands, streams and lakeshores. In fact, creeping buttercup is so widespread in the [Middle Fork Snoqualmie Valley](#) that it was considered too pervasive to survey for. It just isn't practical to consider removing it throughout the valley, let alone recording each place it occurs. However, this is even more reason to look for areas where creeping buttercup hasn't established yet and to keep it out of those areas, for instance on the more pristine higher elevation trails.

In pastures, yards and gardens, we also may need to accept that we can't entirely get rid of this plant. First decide on the level that you can tolerate and work to keep it below that level. For instance, if you have grazing animals, they will mostly avoid buttercup because of its flavor.

However, if there isn't enough healthy forage or if they develop a taste for buttercup, animals could very likely get sick. Also, keeping grass and other forage healthy and abundant is crucial for keeping buttercup at bay, as well as providing healthy forage. In yards and gardens, it will definitely help for you to recognize this plant in the winter when the rosettes are easier to remove and before the plants start their rapid spring growth. A large area heavily infested with buttercup is a huge challenge to control with or without herbicides, so early detection and quick response is very important with this plant. For information on creeping buttercup identification and control, please visit our website <http://dnr.metrokc.gov/weeds/buttercup-creeping.htm> or contact our office at [noxious.weeds@kingcounty.gov](mailto:noxious.weeds@kingcounty.gov) or 206-296-0290.

## Weed Tips for February

**Pull over-wintering weeds now while the soil is soft and moist.** Rosettes of weeds like [knapweed](#), [tansy ragwort](#), [garlic mustard](#), [milk thistle](#), and [poison-hemlock](#) are easy to find now and the roots will come out without breaking. Late winter, while the soil is moist and not much is growing out there, is a great time to find and pull these noxious weeds.

**Mulch before the weeds pop up.** If you have ever struggled with garden beds full of pesky annuals like bittercress a.k.a. shotweed ([Cardamine hirsuta](#) and related species), then mulching now might be your answer. Bittercress is happily growing right now, undeterred by the winter chill, and will be bolting and seeding before you know it in the early spring. There are many other annual weeds that can be managed well by a nice thick layer of mulch in garden beds and any areas that lack good plant cover to keep the weeds in check.

**Watch for [gorse](#), starting to flower later this month.** Keep your eyes out for the fragrant yellow flower clusters on large, spiny bushes. Expect to find this plant along coastal areas and in forests on well-drained soils. Pulling or digging up this plant is possible while the soil is loose but you may need a weed wrench and heavy duty gloves.

**Warm up with weeding by joining a neighborhood work party.** This is a great time of year for pulling ivy, Scotch broom and other invasive weeds, and the best way to do it is with a big group of energetic volunteers. There are work parties going on regularly throughout the county and there is certainly one near you. Check with your local parks department or [King County Parks](#), and organizations like [Mountains to Sound Greenway](#), [EarthCorps](#), [Green Seattle Partnership](#), [United Way of King County](#) or your local community groups, schools and churches. For more ideas, see our volunteer resources page <http://dnr.metrokc.gov/wlr/lands/weeds/volunteer.htm>. If you know of other groups or agencies that are looking for volunteers to join weed control or restoration work parties, email us at [noxious.weeds@kingcounty.gov](mailto:noxious.weeds@kingcounty.gov) and we will add it to our web page.

## 2008 King County Noxious Weed List Approved

The [King County Noxious Weed Control Board](#) met in January to approve the [2008 King County Noxious Weed List](#). Most of the changes were summarized in the [December 2007 KC Weed News](#) and were a direct result of the changes made to the State Noxious Weed List. However, there were a few other changes to the county list so I'll summarize all of the changes here as they appear on the 2008 county list.

- The [King County Class A list](#) has four additions (three are new weeds and one is an upgrade from the Class B list) and one removal. The three new Class A noxious weeds are [ricefield bulrush \(\*Schoenoplectus mucronatus\*\)](#), [European hawkweed \(\*Hieracium sabaudum\*\)](#), and [variable-leaf milfoil \(\*Myriophyllum heterophyllum\*\)](#). Of these, only European

hawkweed is known to be in King County but we will be on the lookout for the other two as well. The upgraded weed is [common cordgrass \(\*Spartina anglica\*\)](#). The reason it is being upgraded to a Class A is that populations have been reduced to the point where eradication is a real possibility. The removed weed from the Class A list is [lawnweed \(\*Soliva sessilis\*\)](#), which is now a non-designated noxious weed in King County.

- The [King County Class B list](#) has one addition, [common reed \(\*Phragmites australis\*, nonnative genotype\)](#). This plant is designated for required control throughout the county.
- The [King County Class C list](#) has one new species: [common hawkweed \(\*Hieracium lachenalii\*\)](#). The King County Weed Board selected this Class C weed for required control throughout the county. This had already been the case last year since this hawkweed was included in the general category of unspecified non-native invasive hawkweeds, also a Class C weed selected for required control county-wide. If you think the hawkweed listings and names are confusing, you are not alone! Feel free to [contact us](#) if this is confusing.

The remainder of the changes to the 2008 county list are weeds that are not required for control in King County.

- The [King County Non-Designated Noxious Weed List](#) has only one addition. [Lawnweed or carpet burweed \(\*Soliva sessilis\*\)](#) was moved down from the Class A list because it is much more widespread than previously thought. Control is no longer required in the county but still recommended, especially where there is a likelihood of impact to recreation or natural resources.
- The [King County Weeds of Concern List](#) has two additions, [creeping buttercup \(\*Ranunculus repens\*\)](#) and [tall buttercup \(\*Ranunculus acris\*\)](#). Neither of these species is on the State Noxious Weed List but the King County Weed Board recognizes these species as invasive and problematic in pastures and natural areas and recommends containment and control where feasible.

You can download the 2008 King County Noxious Weed List brochure from our [brochures page](#) or request one by mail by calling our office at 206-296-0290 or by email at [noxious.weeds@kingcounty.gov](mailto:noxious.weeds@kingcounty.gov).

## Weed Watchers Program Goes County-wide

Last year we started a volunteer Weed Watchers program to help us keep an eye on the plants showing up in county lakes, especially those with public boat launches. We started with eleven lakes that seemed most at risk of getting [Brazilian elodea \(\*Egeria densa\*\)](#), because of their public boat launches and proximity to known infestations. We trained volunteers on these lakes to identify the plants in the water and around the shoreline and then they went out twice in the summer to record what they found at different spots around their lake. This year we are opening the program up to all interested participants in the county. All you need is access to a lake and the desire to learn what's growing in the water!

This kind of regular monitoring is the best way to catch new infestations of invasive plants while they are still small enough to remove. Weed Watcher volunteers are trained to look for all the priority aquatic noxious weeds, but the main focus is on Brazilian elodea, a class B noxious weed. This submerged plant has been found in five King County lakes: Washington, Sammamish, Union, Fenwick, and Doloff. It travels easily on boats and boat trailers, and it's only a matter of time before it reaches the next lake or lakes. It is very difficult to control and

can be quite destructive. Our best defense will be early detection of small patches and rapid response to eradicate them, but we need help with the early detection part.

Weed Watcher volunteers will be trained to identify the plants in their lakes and the noxious weeds we're primarily concerned with. They will be asked to complete two surveys of their lakes each season, one in early summer and one in late summer/early fall. If priority noxious weeds are found, we will immediately begin an eradication program. The first part of the training will be in conjunction with the King County Lake Stewardship training in April 2008. The second part will be a hands-on plant ID workshop as soon as the plants are growing in lakes, probably June. If you are interested in finding out more or participating, please contact our aquatic noxious weed specialist Katie Messick at 206-296-0290 or [katie.messick@kingcounty.gov](mailto:katie.messick@kingcounty.gov).

### **Ecology Finalizes Aquatic Noxious Weed Permit**

The revised permit for aquatic herbicide applications in Washington has been finalized. The permit itself and a fact sheet are available at the Washington State Dept of Ecology website: [http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/pesticides/final\\_pesticide\\_permits/noxious/noxious\\_index.html](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/pesticides/final_pesticide_permits/noxious/noxious_index.html). The aquatic noxious weed permit covers all noxious and quarantine-list weed control activities that discharge herbicides directly into streams or rivers, or indirectly into streams, rivers, estuaries, wetlands, along lake shorelines, or in other wet areas. The goals of the permit are to ensure pesticides with the lowest risk are used; reduce amounts of pesticides applied; track pesticide use; require public notifications and postings when waters are treated; and monitor levels of pesticides in the water after treatment.

Many things will remain the same with the new permit but there are a few changes. The first big change will be the application and reporting system. It is being built now and should be available by early March. Applicants shouldn't use the old system anymore. The other big change is that all permittees, cooperators, and contractors are required to post the sign templates found in the back of the permit as templates. These are fill in the blank forms that cannot be altered otherwise.

As in previous years, most shoreline, wetland and streamside noxious weed control projects will be able to apply for coverage under the Washington State Department of Agriculture permit from Ecology. This process allows for a quicker turn around and also allows WSDA to take care of some of the permit requirements such as monitoring and legal notices. Applications for coverage under the WSDA permit will be considered starting March 17, 2008. For more information, see the WSDA website:

<http://agr.wa.gov/PlantsInsects/Weeds/NPDESPermits/default.htm>.

The noxious weed permit does not apply to the use of herbicides in lakes or ponds (including man-made and natural ponds). All in-lake activities are covered under a separate permit issued by Ecology, the Aquatic Plant and Algae Management General Permit. The Aquatic Plant permit is also needed for aquatic herbicide applications to control plants not listed on the state noxious weed or quarantine lists (for example, blackberry, creeping buttercup, and bittersweet nightshade). Information on obtaining that permit can be found on the Ecology website at: [http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/pesticides/final\\_pesticide\\_permits/aquatic\\_plants/aquatic\\_plant\\_permit\\_index.html](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/pesticides/final_pesticide_permits/aquatic_plants/aquatic_plant_permit_index.html).

For more information on aquatic pesticide permits in Washington State, contact Kelly McLain at the Department of Ecology at (360) 407-6938 or [kelm461@ecy.wa.gov](mailto:kelm461@ecy.wa.gov). For information about

aquatic noxious weed control issues in King County, you can contact our aquatic noxious weed specialist Katie Messick at 206-296-0290 or [katie.messick@kingcounty.gov](mailto:katie.messick@kingcounty.gov).

### **Pacific Northwest Flower and Garden Show**

One great antidote for these chilly February days is the warmth and color of the Northwest Flower and Garden Show (<http://www.gardenshow.com/seattle/index/index.asp>). The show is being held from February 20 to 24 at the Convention Center in downtown Seattle. If you are lucky enough to be at the show, make sure to stop by the WSDA-Noxious Weed Board booth and the King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks booth. There will be noxious weed experts on hand at the state noxious weed table and plenty of great gardening and weed resources at both booths.

### **Job Opening for State Noxious Weed Education Specialist**

If you've been reading this newsletter regularly, you know that the Washington State Noxious Weed Board is short one very important staff person, the education specialist. They are now hiring for this position and will be accepting applications until February 22. If you would like to apply or know someone who would, please check out the job description on the WA State Weed Board website:

<http://www.nwcb.wa.gov/Employment/WSNWCB%20ed%20specialist%202008.pdf>. For more information on the position, contact the State Weed Board's Executive Secretary, Alison Halpern at (360) 902-2053 or [AHalpern@agr.wa.gov](mailto:AHalpern@agr.wa.gov).

### **King County Website and Email Addresses are Changing**

The domain name for all of King County's websites and email addresses is changing from **metrokc.gov** to **kingcounty.gov** by the end of 2008. The email addresses are already changing to @kingcounty.gov and we have a quick link set up for our website:

[www.kingcounty.gov/weeds](http://www.kingcounty.gov/weeds). The links to other pages on our site haven't changed yet so they will still work. As the transfer moves forward, the links in this newsletter and earlier additions may not work, but the quick address above will continue to work and you can always navigate to the individual pages from the index page. Hopefully this will not cause too much of an inconvenience. Please feel free to [contact Sasha Shaw](#) (206-263-6468) if you encounter any problems with accessing our website.